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# BUCKS COUNTY Courier Times

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## EPA investigates asbestos tip

By **JOAN HELLYER**  
Bucks County Courier Times

The Environmental Protection Agency is investigating a tip about possible asbestos contamination at the Clara Barton Elementary School in Bristol Township, an agency spokeswoman confirmed on Friday.

"It is uncertain if there has been any exposure and, if there was exposure, how much exposure," EPA spokeswoman Bonnie Smith said.

Smith said the agency received an anonymous tip Wednesday about the possible contamination after floor tiles that contained asbestos had been removed from three classrooms.

Asbestos is a mineral once widely used in building materials for its insulation and fire-retardant properties. Damaged or disturbed asbestos may release fibers that can cause lung cancer or other respiratory illnesses, according to the EPA.

Air-quality tests done at the school off Blue Lake Road on Thursday showed no signs of contamination from the Category One non-friable material, said Jack Carney, president of EHS Environmental Inc., the company that conducted the tests.

"Based on the test results, it doesn't appear that it is serious," Carney said. "I understand that the floor tiles remained intact. They are not easily broken or reduced to powder [from] hand pressure."

School was not in session when a member of Barton's maintenance staff removed the tiles from the three classrooms Monday and Tuesday, district spokeswoman Eileen Kelliher said.

A work order had been issued to fix "some tiles that were popping up" in the fifth-grade rooms, Kelliher said. But because a lot of tiles were



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popping up, the staff member "decided to take up everything," she said.

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However, there were enough new tiles available to cover only half of one of the classroom floors. The rest of that floor as well as the floors in the other two rooms were left stripped to the bare concrete, Kelliher said.

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Students and staff returned to school Wednesday and spent

part of the day in the classrooms before Acting Superintendent Ellen Budman had them moved to other areas of the building, Kelliher said. For the rest of the week, the fifth-grade classes were held in the faculty room, art room and library, she said.

By Friday, new tiles had been installed in the three classrooms, Kelliher said. An asbestos abatement team is scheduled to give the rooms a thorough cleaning today and a second round of air-quality tests will be conducted to determine if they can be occupied again, Carney said.

The EPA is trying to determine what, if any, reprimands the district should receive for the way the tile removal was handled, Smith said.

District officials sent a letter home to parents on Thursday to explain what happened, Kelliher said. They plan to send a second letter home next week to give parents an update.

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February 24, 2007 8:13 AM

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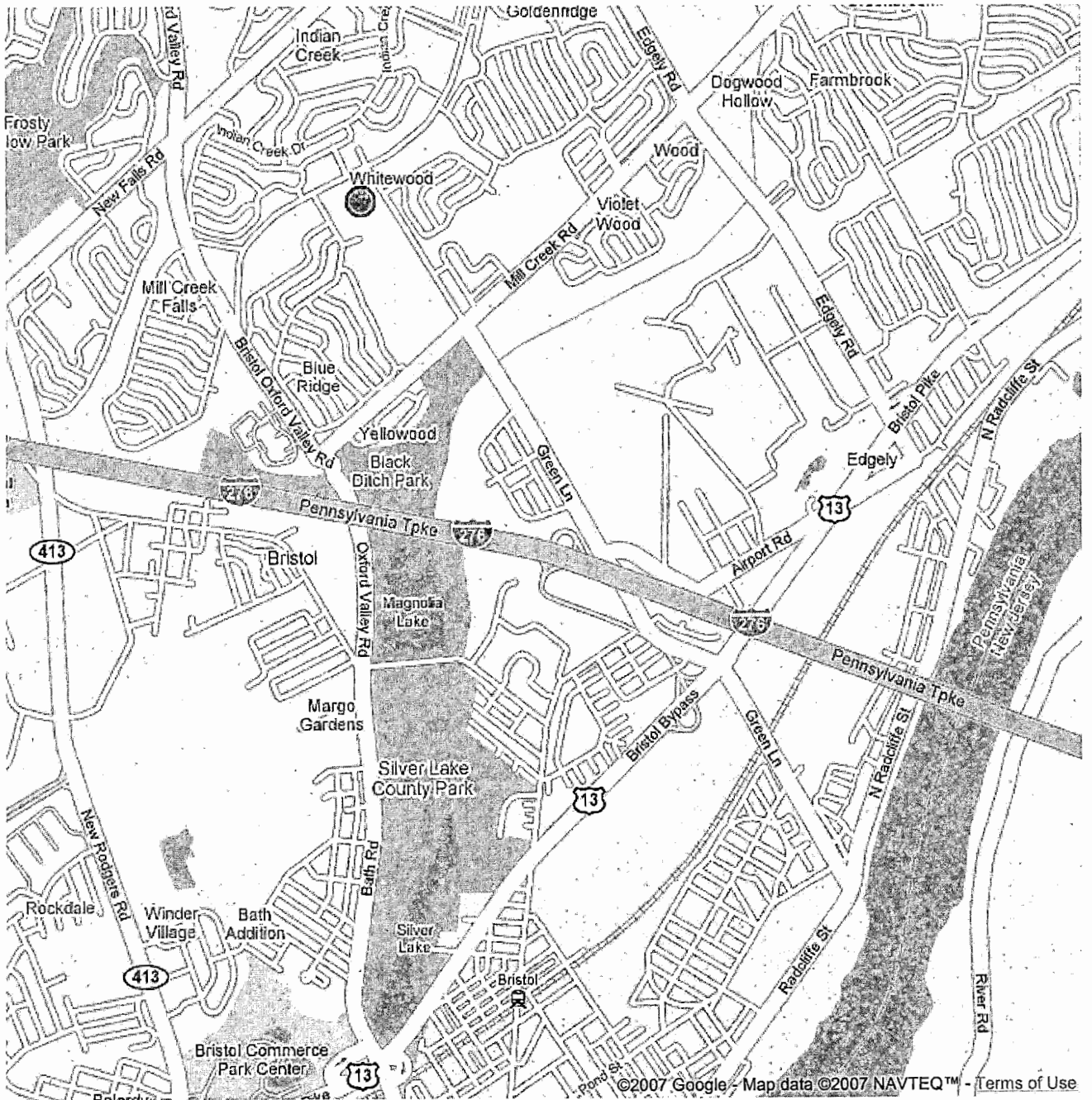
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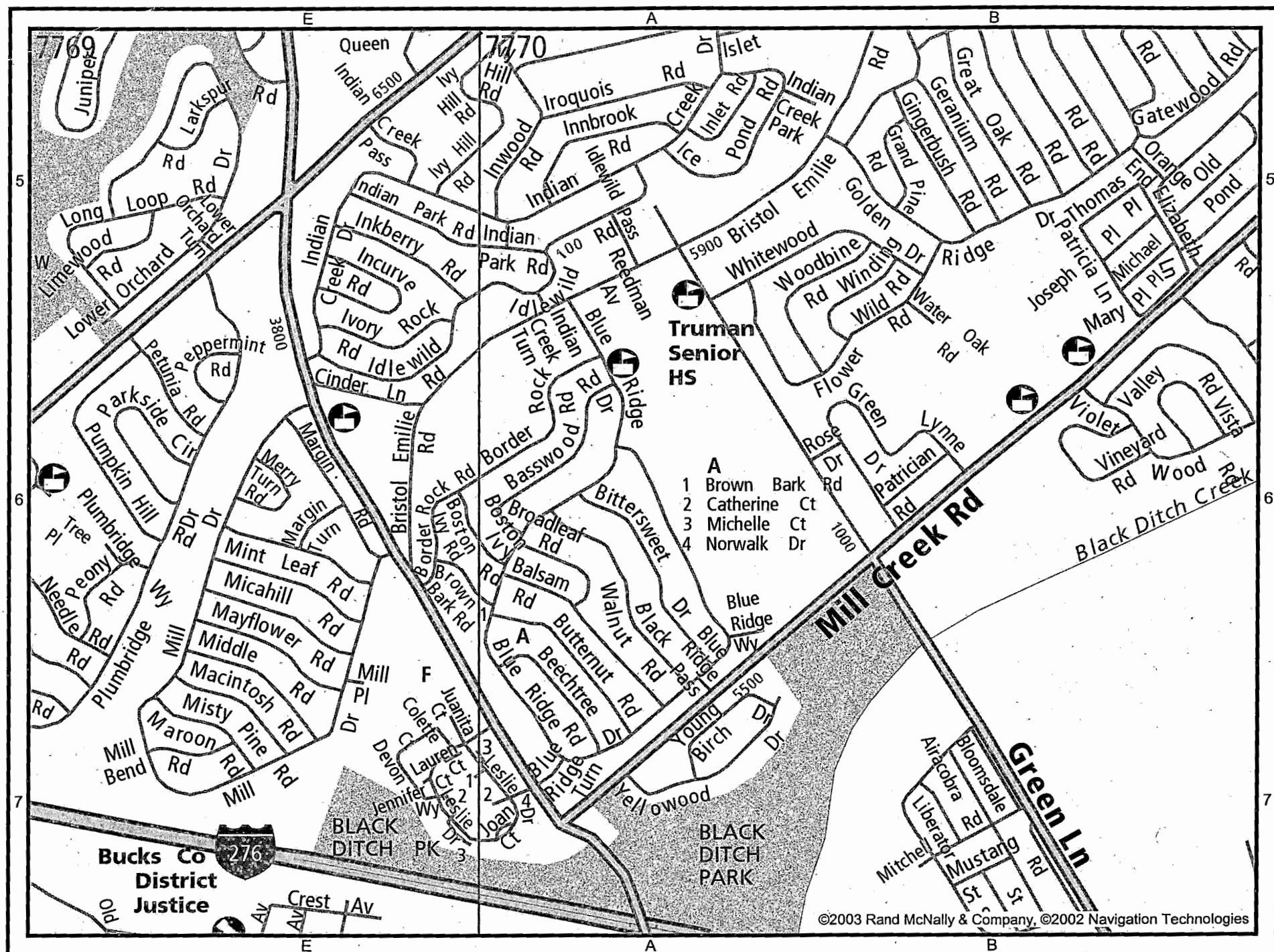
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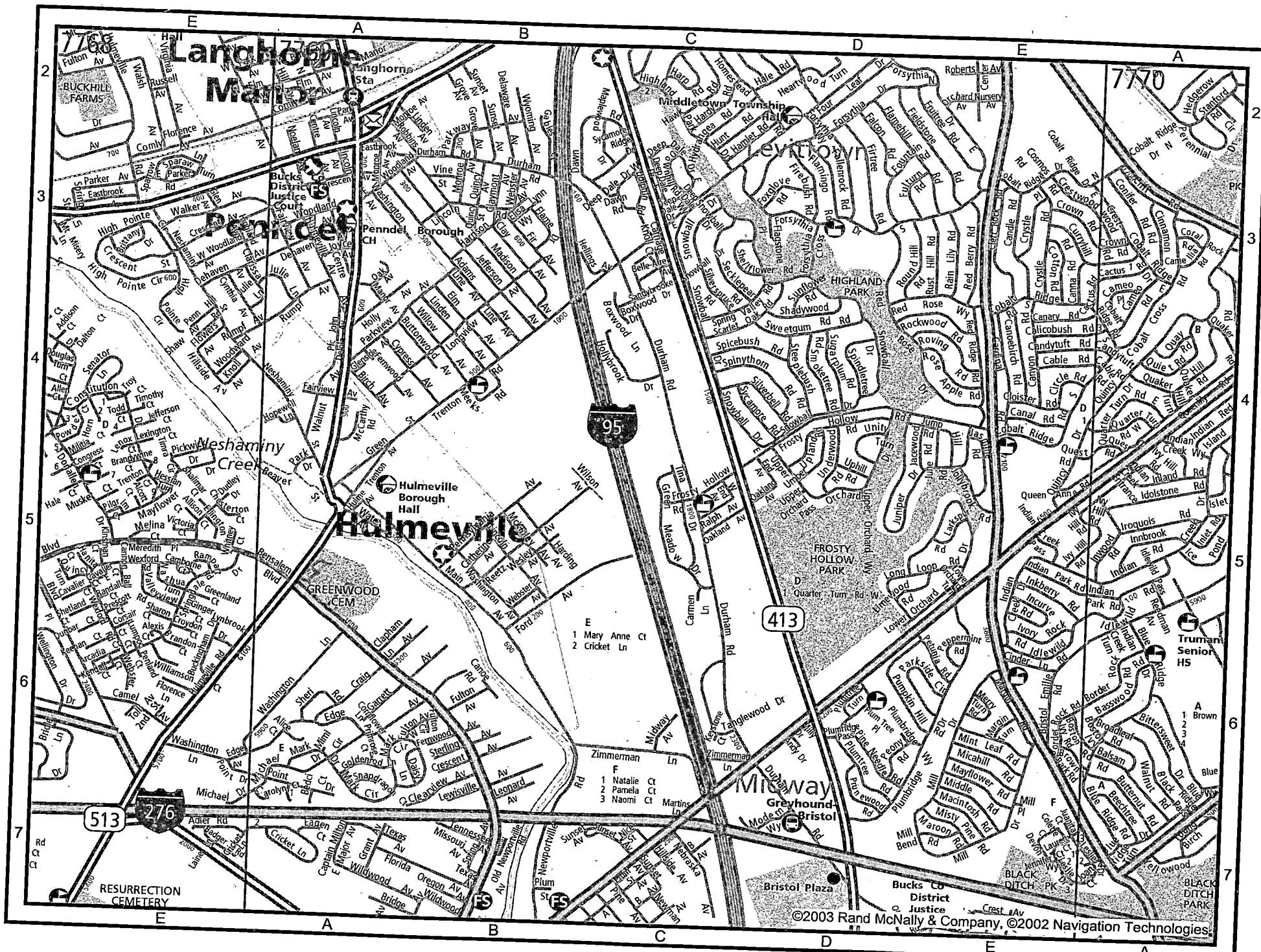
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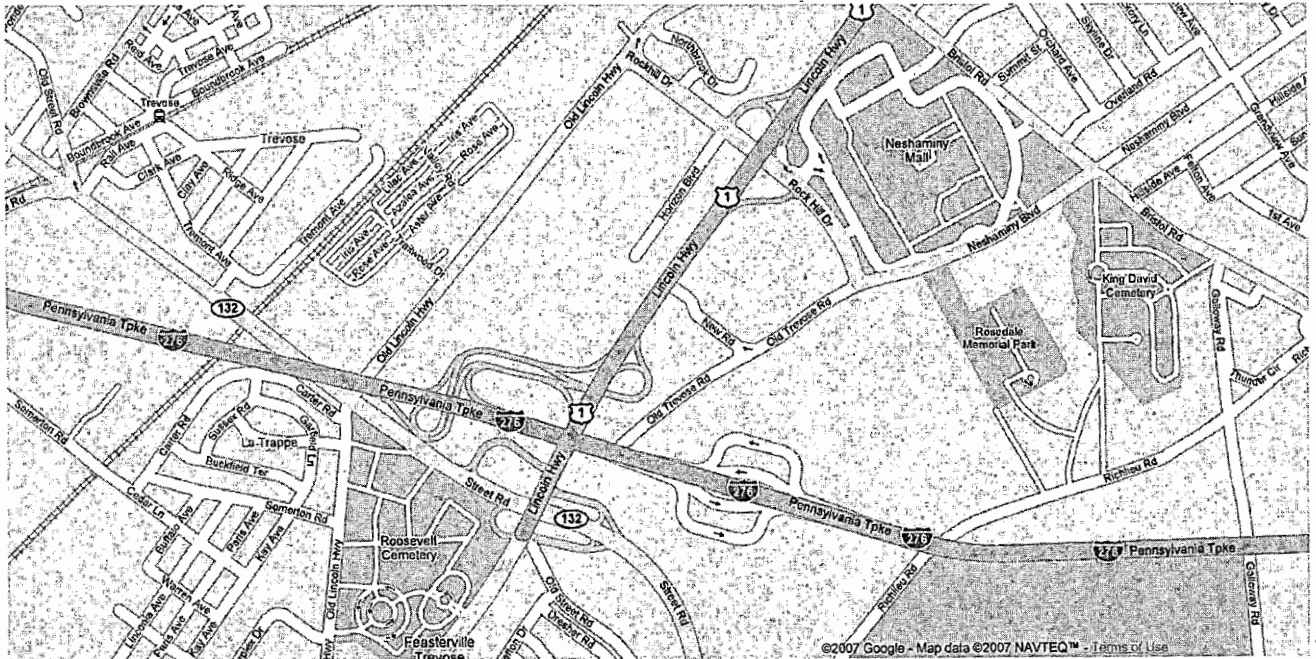












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